

home life

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*Your home's natural
environment can cue
design inspiration*



Before You Build

Working With the Environment

The concept of constructing living spaces around specific climates and geographic regions is a hot topic today. Here are a couple of examples of how homeowners can and should let their home's environment guide remodel or add-on projects. We will visit other regions in subsequent issues.

LIFE IN THE SUB-TROPICS

Heat and humidity keep residents of Florida indoors on summer days. So once the sun goes down, people are ready to move outside to enjoy the cooler evening air. But open patios or decks are out of the question—mosquitoes and other bugs thrive in the region's many marshes and waterways. Enclosed porches and sunrooms that can be sealed off to the elements are far more desirable for homeowners considering additions. But before you build or remodel, consider the following:

Construction Materials And Practices

Tropical storms and constant humidity are facts of life in Florida, so it is important that you consult with your contractor to determine the best materials for your particular job. This is especially true for wind-resistive construction. The Florida Building Code sets strict standards on wind loads that vary by geographic wind line contours. Ensuring that your project is compliant with these ordinances will almost certainly require that a qualified contractor do the work. The state also grants financial incentives for incorporating wind-resistive features into new construction. To learn more about eligibility, talk to your contractor, or consult the Division of Housing and Community Development at: www.floridacommunitydevelopment.org/mitdb

MULTITASKING IN CALIFORNIA

Because Californians enjoy pleasant weather almost year round, open-air dining rooms and outdoor living rooms with fireplaces and comfy chairs are becoming quite popular in many parts of the state. Creating comfortable outdoor spaces, however, requires creating a balance between the architecture of the home and the surrounding landscape.

Under Your Feet

The redwood deck is as Californian as surfboards and Hollywood movies, but homeowners looking for something new have more choices than ever. Subtly mixing flooring or foundation surfaces, such as colored concrete, pavers or flagstones, can help define your outdoor spaces and create visually interesting contrasts from one area to the next. Using an indoor/outdoor flooring material can provide a seamless transition between interior and exterior spaces.

Going With the Flow

California's rugged terrain results in a large number of hillside house lots, affording many opportunities to create terraced spaces using retaining walls made of native stone or other rustic materials. Likewise, the region's long growing season makes it ideal for trellises, arbors and other built structures that can support flowers and create unique spaces. Talk to your contractor about shaping your outdoor rooms through such techniques. And for ideas on vines, shrubs on other plants that can tolerate long, dry summers with minimal watering, consult with the California Native Plant Society at: www.cnps.org.